5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

789 away, leaving it alone, an ear of yellow corn is left with it, that its soul may not be stolen. There is an interesting parallel here with
[171] the ear of corn as a "ceremonial mother" in the Southwestern United States. If somebody expresses too strong admiration of a child, fire must be passed near it, or spittle rubbed over its forehead; otherwise the baby will become ill. Infants are particularly susceptible to the evil eye. To cure one that has been thus cursed, a female shaman is summoned, who passes a whole egg all over the baby's body. This is then opened, and the evil eye will be seen (by the shaman) in the yolk of the egg. They throw the egg into the river, or bury it in a secret place. Almost this same belief was found in Chontal of Tabasco. (Customs of San Fernando, Chapter VI, Volume I).

868 Children's education is simple and direct. As soon as a boy is old enough to work at all—at about five years of age—he is given a worn-down machete and set to cutting and hauling wood. From then on, following his father, he learns the man's duties. Girls are started with a miniature metate, grinding corn.

872 The Government maintains some public schools, such as at Bachajon Village, in which a few children learn to read and write, but in general great difficulty is found in obtaining scholars. As soon as they are old enough to study, they are strong enough to be of material help in the house and the farm; the parents do not like to relinquish what represents the interest on the investment of the price paid by the father for marriage, and the expense of the children's early years. Under the present administration, however, efforts to educate the Indians are being pushed as never before.

881 Puberty is attended by no observances of any kind. Marriage,
582 which comes fairly early, has been previously described.

764 At death the ceremonial side is greatly emphasized. The funeral rites combine the idea of mourning with a general belief that the soul of the departed lingers for a brief time about his former domicile. When possible, the house of the deceased is abandoned for a short time, during which period, if any small animal is observed about the house, particularly at night, it is supposed to be his soul. No particular powers are ascribed to the soul, as far as could be found out, but it is considered poor company.

As it happened, a man was killed while we were at the Finca Encanto, whose funeral rites we could observe. His wife began mourning for him almost immediately—this being in the middle of the afternoon. His body was taken to another house, neighbour to his own. The true ceremonies began after nightfall. Accompanied
[123] by Lazaro and Señor Aguilar, the writer went up with a gift of

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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come the domain of the schoolmaster, who represents federal influence in the local community. He has rebuilt parts of the structure in the thirteen years he and his family have lived and worked in this building; it was his fortress when the Indians threatened to kill him for building a chicken coop obtruding into the street, and again when he interceded in a case of homicide. He has a small arsenal stored in his bedroom in preparation for any reversal of his position in the community. The school is his platform, the area he controls and from which he shouts to his compadres—the storekeeper, the fiscal, and the president—to come speak with him.

The long building is subdivided into four classrooms and the living quarters of the schoolmaster's family. The classrooms are furnished with crude benches and tables; blackboards and charts of birds, animals, and the alphabet decorate the walls. The back porch, converted to classrooms to accommodate the three hundred and fifty children, overflows with benches. The students' own materials—a notebook, pencil, and erasers—are provided by their parents. When a notebook is filled, the students industriously erase all the marks and reuse the book until it falls apart.

When I was in the village, the schoolmaster often encouraged visitors to share a Coca-Cola with him in his office. Here, surrounded by his books, his collection of artifacts of both genuine and spurious origin, a picture of the district inspector of federal schools pinning a medal on his chest, the flag of the Mexican republic, he could speak freely of the personal attacks and frustrations and of the rare satisfactions he encountered "in bringing civilization to the town." As he began to build up his political power in the community, the president and síndico often consulted with him on town affairs. Agents of the federal or departmental offices who came to town frequently communicated with him directly before going to the cabildo. The school became the arena for working out political programs and strategies. The schoolmaster prided himself on being the primary channel of communication between the outside world and the village.

The conflict of interest between the schoolmaster and the parents of the children over attendance in school has been ameliorated in recent years with the acceptance by some of the parents of education as an advantage. In the early years of compulsory education, physical force was used to round up the children. The traumatic experience of his first day in school

304 **The traumatic experience of his first day in school** In the Eyes of the Ancestors is recounted by a man now sixty-eight years of age. He was thirteen in 1918, the first year that compulsory education was introduced into the town.

I was in my house when I heard the civil authorities call the children to school. The police came to tell me to go to school. I did not go because my mother wanted me to accompany her on the road to Teopisca. On our way to Teopisca, the inspector saw me and asked me why I didn't go to school. My mother replied, "I am a widow. He came with me because I seek for what we eat. Therefore he must go with me."

The inspector did not hear her words. Since he was mounted on horseback, he said to me as I was walking, "Come here, boy. Don't walk on foot, climb up on the horse." I was embarrassed to climb up on the horse, and I had some fear because I had never ridden on horseback. I began to cry. "Don't cry," he said. "You are only going to school. The schoolmaster will not beat you." It is then that my mother said, "Señor, don't take him. See that there is no one else to accompany me on the road. When I come home, there will be no one to do errands."

But the inspector feared nothing. His heart was hot, hot. A man came by and told the inspector that I did not know how to ride and that I was afraid. The inspector said, "If he doesn't know how to ride, then you take him." But the man replied, "But I don't want to. It is better that I go get wood. You take him by force if you can, Señor. I go before your face" [*a way of excusing himself*].

I didn't want to go, and I just cried because I didn't want to. The inspector seized me, and put me on horseback. I was afraid to get up, and I cried and cried from fear. He said, "Stop it! Let us go!"

And so he led the horse with me on it. My mother cried when she saw the inspector take me off on horseback. She remained very sad as I left, since she no longer had a companion. I went on to school, and the inspector handed me over to the schoolmaster.

The schoolmaster gave me a paper with my name, which I didn't know. I did not hear what was said in that large school because I did not know Spanish. The schoolteacher asked me, "What are you called, little boy?" I cried a great deal because I felt sad for my mother whom I had left in

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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Teopisca. The schoolmaster said, "Don't cry, Ceferino. I am not going to beat you because you will learn to write. It is good to know how to write. You will speak Spanish because you will hear it, and you will look at the letters because the letters are the same as they are spoken in Spanish. Sit down now, and come tomorrow."

Then I told my mother to look for a slate and chalk because every morning and afternoon I wrote. She was of one heart and did not cry when she heard how I entered in the school.

For the most part, the teachers rely on authority in their program of instruction rather than encouraging the active involvement of students. In the early years of the school, there was a rapid turnover of teachers, but the employment of a schoolmaster with his wife and daughters stabilized the position after 1953. The children respond with respect and fear to the schoolmaster, and occasionally with interest and enthusiasm. The following reminiscences by the informant, Ceferino, reflect the fear, tempered by some pleasure and interest, which he experienced:

The first schoolteacher I had when I entered school was called Chaya. She taught me to write with chalk on a blackboard. Every time I wrote badly, she told me to erase the letters and write another. After I finished, I went to my house at three in the afternoon. The next day I would go back to school. I would write on the blackboard. Writing was another kind of thing. The chalk did not stick well on the blackboard. Afterward, we started to use ink, and I began to learn well. But for a long time, I did not learn how to read. For one year, I couldn't speak Spanish, but I continued writing letters. This schoolteacher left and another came, Mista Munda Gordi. He asked me what my name was, and I told him. He saw that I didn't write the letters well. He was interested. He told me how to do it. Then I began to improve, and my name came out well. He said that the letters were better. He saw that now it was good. "Now you can make capital letters."

Mista Munda used to beat us if we did not make good letters, but I did not know how to make capitals. He told me he would beat me, so I began to do the capitals well. He saw that it was better. When he saw the letters, he gave me a book. In the first year, I finished the book, and he gave me

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Despite the beating and the scolding, Ceferino recognized that the schoolteachers cared, and this inspired him to learn. He learned to write without any knowledge of the meaning of the words in his first year of schooling, but this did not discourage him. He was among the first four literate Indians in the community.

The program of education for primary schools today is scheduled by the Secretary of Public Education in Mexico City. The teachers conform to this as best they can in the overcrowded, understaffed conditions. The first-year program, according to the book, includes, in addition to reading and math, health studies—basic knowledge of nutrition, social and personal hygiene, the study of the healthful environment, the prevention of diseases and accidents, and first aid. The second-year course includes the study of nature—the sky, earth, seasons, the various changes in the moon, and conservation of natural resources. In the third year of their training the children learn about social life—the child in the home, school, community, and nation. The fourth year includes creative activities—games and artistic expression through learning to play musical instruments and the formation of orchestras, for example. The fifth year teaches practical activities—the construction of toys, work in gardens and other agricultural projects, and the economics of the home; and the program during the sixth year stresses the study of the national language, arithmetic, and geometry. Each of these six sections has a list of the knowledge, habits, abilities, and attitudes the teacher should have formed in the children by the time they have finished the year. The lists become more detailed with each passing year. The amount of material the teacher is expected to cover is impressive.

Mary Marshall's observation of classroom behavior (Appendix 3B) suggests some of the complexities of communicating this standard program in a class of first-year pupils. Inside the schoolroom almost all behavior is initiated and controlled by the teacher. All communication within the school is in Spanish—the teacher ignores responses other than those in Spanish—although most of the children understand no Spanish when they enter school. The regular pattern of question and response is sometimes broken up by demonstration of objects. The children's response is greater when the teacher reverses the pupil-schoolteacher role and lets them ask the questions she tells them. The scarcity of materials imposes a greater bur-

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den on the teacher already laboring with the barrier in communication. Despite these difficulties, the children manage to learn the basics of reading, writing, arithmetic, and Spanish in four years of schooling. The teachers are devoted and spend at least seven hours in the classroom each day.

During the recess period the children play individual competitive games except when organized games are introduced by one of the teachers. There is a tendency toward ganging up on weaker individuals in fights, that occur, but I have never seen signs of marked brutality. Since the Ladino children are a small minority in the school (there are no more than a half a dozen among the three hundred and twenty-four students) the Indian children do not face the discrimination found in schools with a greater proportion of Ladinos (cf. Romney and Romney 1966).

Discipline is no longer as strict as it was in the early years of public education. The teacher allows someone who has been hit to hit the aggressor but does not herself intercede. Threat of punishment may be made by the teacher, but I have never seen it carried out, and it is never suggested as a solution to failure to learn.

In comparing the domestic, civil, and religious domains of activities, the following features emerge:

1. In each domain, a hierarchy of power is present. In the house, males take precedence over females, and older members over younger. In the cabildo, the power hierarchy takes the form of a rank order coordinate with age in most of the offices, while in the schoolhouse, power is polarized with all authority vested in the schoolteacher. In the church, the conflict between the priest and the cofrades (Chapter 9) has not been resolved. Within the ranks of the mayordomos, relationships between the elder and junior mayordomo establish a graded ranking system (Chapter 8).

2. Behavior in each domain is standardized. Relative rank is reflected in seating order, greeting order, and drinking order. Autonomous behavior is most marked in the domain of the church. Focused interaction is predominant in the school, where order and control are based on absorbing the attention of the child in a learning task.

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lating the time of day; when I questioned them as to the hour, they were often as much as an hour off, usually behind.

Most activities are ordered with reference to the Gregorian calendar, but the twenty-day Maya calendrical month, defined as "twenty days or a month" is used in much the same way that we use "a fortnight." The Indians consider the moon to be an uncertain indicator of time, since "she does not walk well." But the moon is important in the culture: people note its different phases and are especially aware of the phase under which a child is born—an important sign for the newborn's future. If a baby is born at the full moon, he is expected to mature more readily. The full moon also signifies a propitious time for undertaking certain activities, such as cutting wood for the main posts of a house and cutting palm for the roof.

The Daily Schedule

Daily activities are organized by traditional economic pursuits. The woman is the first one to rise in the morning. She gets up at dawn, lights the fire, and sets a jar of water to boil for coffee. She grinds the nixtamal cooked the night before on the stone grinding board, or takes it to the mill in the center. She then makes tortillas either by hand or with a press; a recent innovation made of two hinged pieces of wood in which the ball of dough is set between pieces of plastic paper.

The men of the household are served first, followed by the boys; the women and girls eat last. As soon as they have eaten, the men and boys who have finished the required three years of schooling go out to the fields to work. They walk single file even in the streets of the town, the father preceding his sons. Each carries a machete, net bag, tumpline, and sheepskin back-protector if he plans to carry any loads. Many bring shotguns as well in order to hunt for field rats, raccoon, or the burrowing animals they find in the fields.

After the men leave, the women go to the porch and "seize their work." The children go to school, which begins at eight-thirty in the morning and continues until five o'clock in the evening. They return home for lunch, a meal of tortillas, coffee, and sometimes beans or chayote when it is in season.